Yojana (VKGUY) scheme, continuation of the incentive schemes in the 11th Five Year Plan for orthodox tea production which is entirely exported, establishing a Tea Park in West Bengal. A scheme to defray the high inland transport costs of tea exports from the North-East is also being implemented covering all such exports out of ICD Amingaon, near Guwahati.

Revival package for tea industry

1202. SHRI N.R GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the number of tea estates closed/abandoned in our country as on date;

(b) whether Government has any proposal for revival/taking over of these tea estates;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether the production of tea and the share of Indian tea exports in the world market has declined significantly during the last two years;

(e) if so, the details and the reasons therefor; and

(f) the steps taken by the Government to increase production of tea, boosting the export of tea and also provide assistance to the small tea growers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JYOTIRADITYA MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) As on date, 16 tea estates (11 in West Bengal, 5 in Kerala) are lying closed in the country.

(b) and (c) The Government has sanctioned a revival package for 33 closed tea gardens that remained closed as on 1.4.2007. Section 16 (E) of the Tea Act, which provides for handing over management to new entrepreneurs, has been invoked on 4 gardens (2 in West Bengal and 2 in Kerala).

(d) and (e) No Sir. Both the production and exports of tea from India has marginally improved during the year 2008 over 2007 in the World Tea Market.

(f) The steps taken by the Government to increase production and export of tea are given below:

Production of Tea

(i) New planting by the Small Growers

(ii) Replanting, Rejuvenation pruning, infilling and consolidation of existing tea areas.

(iii) Creation of irrigation and drainage facilities in the tea gardens.

(iv) Organising Self Help Groups of small growers

(v) Setting up of new factories, modernization of existing factories, creation of new facilities for product diversification, ISO/HACCP Certification and Quality Awareness Programme.

(vi) R & D support to tea gardens,

(vii) Training of Tea Plantation Workers, Managers

(viii) Welfare measures covering health, sanitation, drinking water, medical care, education of wards of workers etc.

Export of Tea

The Tea Board undertakes promotional activities in the foreign markets and also lends support to Indian tea exporters in their marketing efforts. Such activities are carried by Tea Board through its overseas offices at London, Moscow and Dubai which undertake the following activities:

(i) Participation in international and/or specialized fairs and exhibitions.

(ii) Field sampling at specialty stores and/or principal markets.

(iii) Media publicity.

(iv) Buyer Seller Meets.

(v) P.R. activities to establish closer link between importers and exporters.

(vi) Exchange of tea delegations between India and Tea importing countries.

Transport subsidy is being provided to tea exporters towards meeting the additional transport and handling charges incurred for teas exported through I.C.D., Amingaon in Assam to increase the overall export of tea from India.

Assistance to the small tea growers

Small growers are provided assistance for replantation/rejuvenation of old tea areas and replacment planting, creation of irrigation/drainage/transportation facilities. For individual small growers holding upto 4.00 hectare, assistance is given for new planting in the hilly areas above 2500 MSL.

Small tea growers are encouraged to form Self Help Groups and setting up Leaf collection Centers/Input Storage godowns, purchase of weighing Scales/Leaf carry bags/plastic crates, purchase of Transport vehicles and field inputs-fertilizers & plant protection chemicals and implements- pruning machines, sprayers etc.

Training Programmes are also organized for Small Tea Growers. Finally incentives to the extent of 40% of the cost is being given for setting up of new mini factories by the Self Help Groups of small growers.

Allowing FDI in Retail Sector

1203. SHRI R.C. SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is allowing FDI in retail sector upto 49 per cent in an Indian firm;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;